

Amendments to the Claims:

Please amend the claims as shown in the following listing of claims, which will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the application.

1.-25. (Canceled)

26. (New) A method for manipulating a sample comprising:
punching at least one hole in at least one sample carrier using a needle;
punching at least one sample from at least one preparation using a needle;
detecting a surface position of the at least one sample carrier or of the at least one preparation prior to punching; wherein a suction line in the needle creates negative pressure that is detected as the needle approaches the surface of the sample carrier or preparation and the needle is inserted into the sample carrier or preparation to a predefined punching depth based on the detected position;
and
inserting said at least one sample into the at least one punched-out hole in the sample carrier.
27. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the sample is a tissue sample.
28. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the preparation is a prepared tissue specimen.
29. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein at least one value of the surface position is saved in conjunction with an identifier for the sample carrier or the preparation.
30. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the punching depth is variable.
31. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein material located within the needle is dislodged mechanically with an ejector arranged within the needle after the punching process, and the needle is cleared with compressed air after the ejection procedure.
32. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the needle is submerged in a cleaning fluid after at least one punching process and is afterwards cleared with compressed air.
33. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein the needle is tested for permeability, by negative pressure applied through the suction line.

34. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein detection of position, punching, ejection procedures and/or cleaning and/or testing for permeability of the needle is/are controlled by a timer.
35. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein holes for samples in the sample carrier are arrayed in a pattern generated by arrangement of the holes in form of a binary code.
36. (New) The method of claim 26, wherein manipulation of the sample is carried out under temperature control.
37. (New) A device adapted for manipulating samples comprising:
at least one needle for punching holes in sample carriers during use;
at least one further needle adapted for punching samples from preparations during use;
and
a detector of surface position of the sample carriers or preparations comprising:
suction lines that open into the needles, the suction lines connected with a unit
for detecting negative pressure so that the approach of the needles to
the surface of a sample carrier or preparation is detectable by resulting
negative pressure during use; and
a drive unit operable to displacing the needles relative to a sample carrier or
preparation from a detected surface position to a predefined punching
depth during use.
38. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising a vacuum pump that creates negative pressure during use.
39. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising a storage device for detected position values of sample carriers and/or preparations in combination with an identifier of said sample carriers and/or preparations.
40. (New) The device of claim 37, wherein the needles comprise cross holes into which the suction lines open.
41. (New) The device of claim 40, wherein the needles are arranged within a needle retainer, and said needle retainer comprises at least one drilled hole connected with the cross holes of the needles.

42. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising a device for changing punching depth.
43. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising at least one pneumatically operated ejector adapted for the ejection of punched out materials during use arranged within at least one of the needles.
44. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising a waste container for retaining punched out materials of the sample carriers.
45. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising a cleaning reservoir with cleaning fluid in which the needles can be submerged.
46. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising a waste container and/or cleaning reservoir arranged, during use, between the sample carriers and the preparations or between a support carrying the sample carriers and a support carrying the preparations.
47. (New) The device of claim 46, further comprising a support for the sample carriers and a support for the preparations arranged a circular shape and side by side.
48. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising at least one needle for hole-punching and at least one needle for sample punching are mounted on a pivoting head having a pivot point in which axes of the hole-punching needle and of the sample punching needle intersect each another at the pivot point.
49. (New) The device of claim 48, wherein the pivoting head is operated by a pneumatic pivoting drive during use.
50. (New) The device of claim 48, further comprising a drive unit for displacing the pivoting head relative to the sample carriers or preparations during use.
51. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising a control system for controlling position detection, punching, ejection procedures and/or cleaning procedures during use.
52. (New) The device of claim 51, wherein the control system is a computer.
53. (New) The device of claim 37, further comprising an arrangement for maintaining temperature.